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NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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NOAA AWARDS \$47,000 FOR NATIVE OYSTER RESTORATION

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) awarded \$47,352 to the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians for a community-based project to restore native shellfish to Yaquina Bay, Ore. The project is funded by the Community-based Restoration Program within the NOAA Fisheries Service, and is the first native oyster restoration project funded by NOAA in Oregon.

Oysters play an important role in estuarine ecology by filtering plankton and providing habitat for juvenile Dungeness crabs and many fish species. In the Pacific Northwest, harvesting during the late 1800s and early 1900s diminished native oyster (*Ostrea lurida*) populations. Native oyster restoration projects have been initiated in San Francisco, Puget Sound, and now the Oregon Coast to restore the once plentiful populations that inhabited bays and estuaries from San Francisco Bay to British Columbia.

"NOAA is committed to working with Native American tribes and local volunteers to restore and enhance our natural environment. This grant will help restore a historically important native species that will benefit the local ecosystem, including commercial and recreational fisheries," said retired Navy Vice Adm. Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Ph.D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator.

During the first year, project partners will place bags of mature oysters in several areas, and monitor growth and survival. During the second year, the partners will plant oyster cultch shells (oyster shells that have seed oysters attached) according to the results of the first year's work. The tribe will monitor survival, growth and reproduction in order to maximize the chances for future native oyster restoration projects.

The Tribe notes that native oysters were a predominant food source for Siletz area coastal peoples. In addition to a rich food source, oyster shell supplied material for jewelry and regalia. As oyster populations recover, the Tribe plans to examine the ecological role that native oysters played historically.

The Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians of Oregon are a federally recognized tribe with a current membership of 4200. A council of nine elected officials makes all formal decisions concerning the Tribe. The Tribe owns approximately 4200 acres in Lincoln and Marion Counties, in Western Oregon.

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The NOAA Restoration Center's Community-based Restoration Program (CRP) is a financial and technical assistance program that promotes strong partnerships at the national, regional, and local level to restore fisheries habitat. NOAA CRP works with organizations and government to support locally-driven habitat restoration projects in marine, estuarine, and riparian areas. NOAA CRP funds on-the-ground habitat restoration projects that (1) offer educational and social benefits for citizens and their communities, and (2) provide long-term ecological benefits for fishery resources. Since 1996, more than 900 projects in 26 states have been implemented using NOAA funding and leveraged funding from national and regional habitat restoration partners.

Each year, NOAA awards approximately \$900 million in grants to members of the academic, scientific and business communities to assist the agency in fulfilling its mission to study the Earth's natural systems in order to predict environmental change, manage ocean resources, protect life and property, and provide decision makers with reliable scientific information. NOAA goals and programs reflect a commitment to these basic responsibilities of science and service to the nation for the past 35 years.

NOAA, an agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce, is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources.

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On the Web:

NOAA: <http://www.noaa.gov>

Community-based Restoration Program: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration>